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DEFENSE OF ENGLISH IN CHINESE MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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[Summary: The Ministry of Education in a pronouncement published in its official publication, defended the teaching of English in the middle schools and rebuked those who wrote to the ministry questioning the wisdom of continuing English in the curriculum. A translation of the official statement, entitled, "Replies to Questions Concerning the Teaching of English in the Middle Schools" follows:]

We [Ministry of Education] have received letters questioning the advisability of teaching English in the middle schools; we now summarize our replies to these letters as follows:

According to the "Provisional Rules and Regulations Governing Middle Schools," each school may teach Russian or English. Since we must study the Soviet Union, studying the Russian language is very important and essential. On the other hand, English also has definite values and it is still necessary for some people to study it.

English, like other languages, is a tool for communicating ideas and for mutual understanding.

Moreover, English, at present, is the language of the people in many countries and is used in various technical fields.

With reference to middle school students, the study of English will help broaden and intensify their preparation for future study of various subjects. After entrance to institutions of higher learning their study of English has a definite value and some students will have to continue studying it.

For this reason, the teaching of English in the middle schools should enable the students to acquire a basic vocabulary and some of the basic principles of grammar. Upon graduation, students should be able to read simple material, write short essays, and carry on general conversation; and through study, application, and practice they can build an English-language foundation.

The Ministry of Education is now in the process of reorganizing and writing outlines and materials for teaching English. Before the final writing, each educational and cultural office and bureau must select teaching materials to supply the school's needs.

There are not enough middle schools and classes in the nation teaching Russian, and they must gradually be increased; naturally, the number of schools and classes teaching English can then be decreased slightly. But this does not mean that middle schools will teach only Russian and not English. In principle, the establishment of foreign-language departments in the middle schools is not limited to one language; the middle school foreign-language departments in the Soviet Union teach English, French, German, and a number of other languages.

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In changing over to the teaching of Russian, it is necessary to see that there are adequate teaching materials. As the teaching of this language increases, classes already studying English will not be changed to Russian, but new Russian-language classes will be started. The establishment and revision of the middle school foreign-language department will follow this principle. The revision must be examined and approved by every educational and cultural office and bureau.

If the number of English classes should be reduced, the excess number of English language teachers must be properly placed by every educational and cultural office and bureau.

For this reason, the present middle school teachers and students of English can feel assured that they must teach and study English well. If not, the students will suffer irreparable loss; they will know neither Russian nor English because of the lack of Russian language teachers and the inefficiency of English instruction by the teachers and of study by the students.

Class and school administrators must see that English courses are conducted regularly and the teaching efficiency gradually raised.

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